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Andy Warhol

Bang!

Andy Warhol

Early Pop Drawings 1952–1962

October 23 – December 6, 2014

Essay by Dave Hickey



Hirsch & Adler Modern

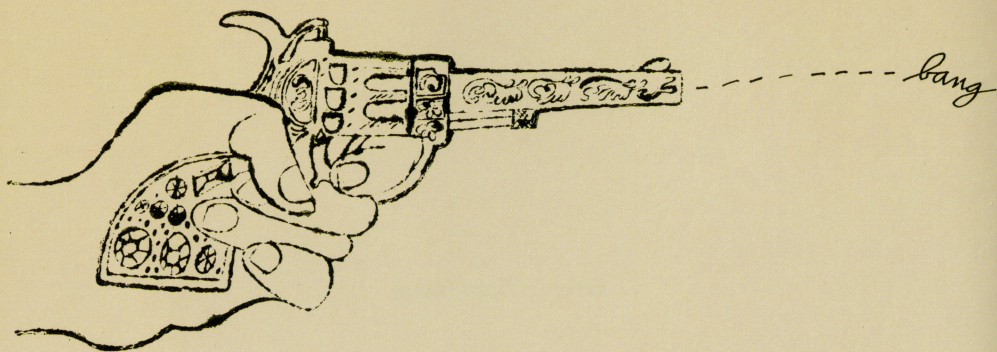
The Crown Building

730 Fifth Avenue

New York, New York 10019

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www.HirschAndAdler.com



Untitled (Bang)

1960

Ink on paper mounted on board

9¼ x 14¼ in.

Foreword

For most, the name Andy Warhol instantly conjures his iconic soup cans, Marilyn, Liz, Elvis, Jackie—works first exhibited in 1962–63 and widely considered to have changed the course of art in the 20th century. But few consider what preceded them.

Hirschl & Adler Modern is proud to present an exhibition devoted exclusively to Warhol's drawings from 1952–62, an often overshadowed decade that illuminates Warhol's transcendence from commercial illustrator to art world sensation.

These works, many of which are being shown publicly for the first time in years, celebrate Warhol as a sensitive draftsman through his use of graphite, ink, gouache, and collage elements. Equally important are his experimental blotted line drawings. Created with mono-print techniques and often colored with watercolor dyes and applied gold leaf, these lively and expressive methods developed by Warhol during this time shaped his later trademark style forever embedded in the American psyche.

We wish to thank Dave Hickey for sharing his refreshing and insightful understanding of this area of Warhol's work. At Hirschl & Adler, special thanks are due Ted Holland and Chelsea Larson. Most importantly, we thank the collectors who have generously made available this rich and compelling selection of drawings.

Shelley Farmer, *Director*

capricorn
Sloe Whiskey Fizz



juice of $\frac{1}{2}$ lemon, 1 teaspoon sugar, 1 zipper
whiskey. Shake with ice, strain into
highball glass. Fill with soda and
ice cubes.

Capricorn Sloe Whiskey Fizz

1959

Ink, ink wash, and paper collage

23 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 18 in.

Andy Plants Birdseed, Plays Baseball

DAVE HICKEY

A light-hearted observer might note that Andy Warhol's devotion to drawing cut short his athletic career. Well, you could say that. When the Warhola boys were growing up in Pittsburgh, they worked in their mother's garden before and after school, and then they went to play softball in the park. They always stationed Andy in right field from whence he would wander off to the concrete steps in the shade to draw stars and butterflies. This resulted in a lot of right-field home runs, but the garden grew, and, as often as they could, the Warhola boys would haul their vegetables out to the suburbs to sell them to the well-to-do. The ever-thrifty Andy always went along on these trips to sell his drawings to his brother's customers. He was not totally unsuccessful.

Thus Warhol, the draftsman, was born, and the strangest thing about Andy's penchant for drawing is that it was always the one aspect of his practice about which he was the most insecure. Like de Kooning before him, Andy had no predisposition to float a figure in a spatial field. He was always locking the figure into the rectangle and attaching it to the surface of his drawings like a true modernist, except for *Sam*, 1952 (p. 24), who is granted his own domain. Otherwise, all the tricks and devices that enliven Andy's drawing and painting over the years are present in these drawings. We find his proclivity to



The Night the Roxy Opened

1961

Ink, watercolor, and gold paper appliqué on paper

17 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 25 $\frac{1}{8}$ in.

integrate the caption into the drawing in *Sam, Capricorn. Sloe Whiskey Fizz*, 1959 (p. 4), and *Untitled (Bang!)*, 1960 (p. 2) with its limp little bullet swooning out of the gun. The “captioning” would reach its first apotheosis in the Soup Cans. These paintings would also align Andy’s practice with Edward Ruscha’s work in the same vineyard.

From the beginning, Andy routinely imposed an inferred grid or field on his drawings, as he does with *Untitled (Train)*, 1952 (p. 24). The little train runs across the top of the page, locked into the box, with the box cars implying a grid. The full grid, slightly nuanced, appears in 1955 with the pivotal *Butterflies*, 1955–56 (p. 10), a subject that dates back to Andy’s baseball days. In *Female Head with Purple Hair*, 1958 (p. 11), the grid becomes an explosion of flowers, butterflies and bees that surround the female head like an aura. (Andy always apotheosized women because he would rather have been one.) The most apparently “normal” of these drawings, *Two Female Fashion Figures*, 1960–61 (p. 18), would be normal were it not for the fact that right toe of the foreground figure and the left toe of the background figure point directly into the lower right-hand corner of the sheet, so the girls seem suspended like balloons from this implied tether, light and buoyant.

These drawings also employ one of Andy’s favorite devices, that of unhitching drawing from color and letting them co-exist. This practice, I think, arises again from his nervousness about floating a figure (untethered) in a field. In *The Night the Roxy Opened*, 1961 (opposite), Andy uses floating stains of primary colors to support the flattened image of the crowd. In *Untitled (Glamour Girl)*, 1962 (p. 9) Andy frames the head of a fashion figure, with gestural colored marks that locate her in the

upper-right hand corner of the drawing, like a postage stamp on a letter. This casual conjunction of drawing and gestural color would become Andy's favorite device in his portraits beginning with the Marilyn Monroe paintings, in which the photo image is elevated to the level of iconicity by the spontaneity of the gestures surrounding it.

Andy's most famous mask for his insecurity would be the invention that made him famous as an illustrator with his I. Miller shoe drawings: The "blotted line." This line expresses one of Andy's favorite axioms: "If you know what's right, you can do what's wrong." This axiom assumes that if you do what is wrong, the idea of what is right will be self-evident in its transgression. Andy would never put it so elaborately but that's what's implied, "dressing down" implies knowledge of "dressing up." This, a friend of mine observed, brands Andy as a self-admitted criminal. He breaks the law in full awareness of the law he is breaking.

The law in this case is the first law of graphic penmanship: the line of ink will be clear and flow naturally. Andy breaks this law by blotting the line of ink while it's still wet. This trope appears over and over in these drawings. It introduces a raggedy, painterly edge to the ink line. Most importantly, for newspaper drawings, it has already been "printed" once, and this introduces the idea that the drawing was wet when it went into the press. This line reveals Andy at his most charming. He breaks the "law of lines" while acknowledging the eccentricities of the print medium with a daunting awareness that made him the most famous commercial illustrator of his time. This naughty-boy twist always reminds me of Andy's little gifts to his editors. He had no money, so he would send them packages of birdseed with



Untitled (Glamour Girl)

1962

Gouache and graphite on paper

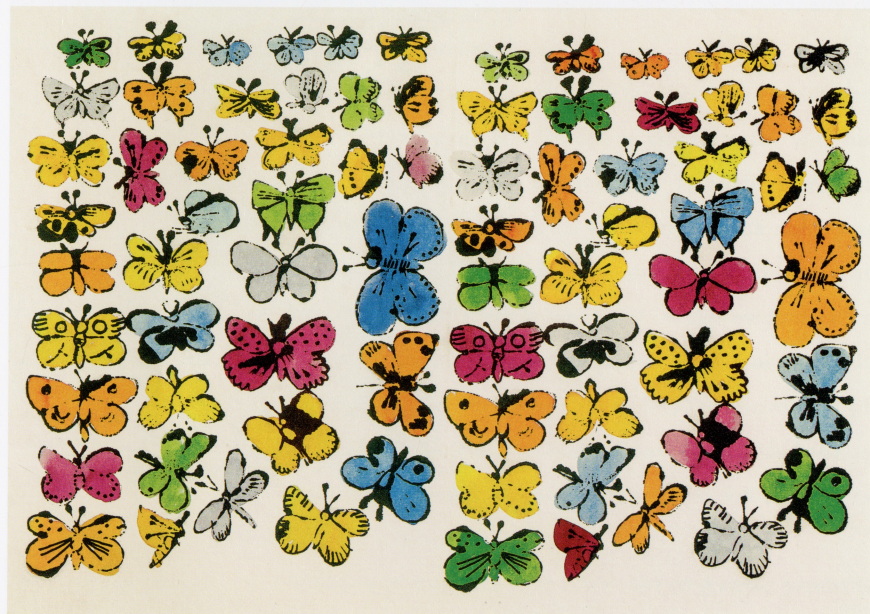
29 x 23 in.

Butterflies

1955–56

Ink and watercolor on paper

13 x 18 in.



instructions to plant them and watch the birds grow, and so they did in Andy's blotted drawings.

So everything is here: a synoptic survey of Warhol's devices is gathered in this slim portfolio of magnificent drawings—the flatness, the obsession with the rectangle, the captioning, the disjunction of line and color, the grid, the field, and the blotted line. And also, finally, we are introduced to his unerring sense of the right wrong colors. So was it always there? I suspect so. Why else would young Andrew Warhola have abandoned the dream of playing right field for the Pirates?

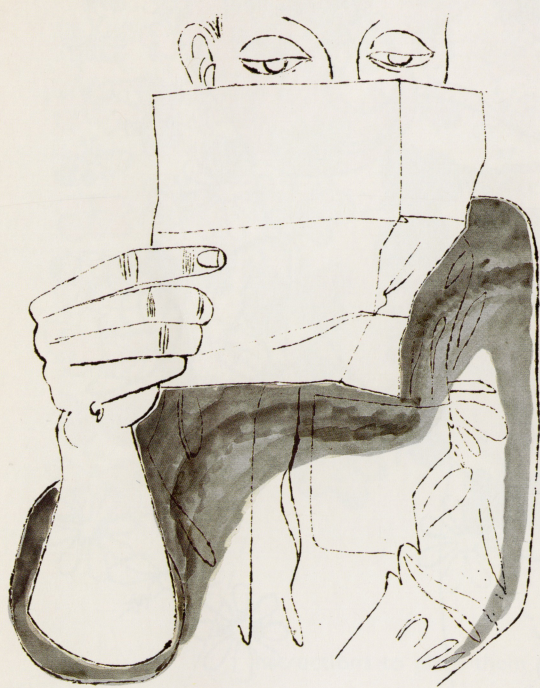


Female Head with Purple Hair

1958

Ink and ink wash on paper

22⁵/₈ x 14¹/₈ in.



Letter of Love

1957

Ink and ink wash on Strathmore paper

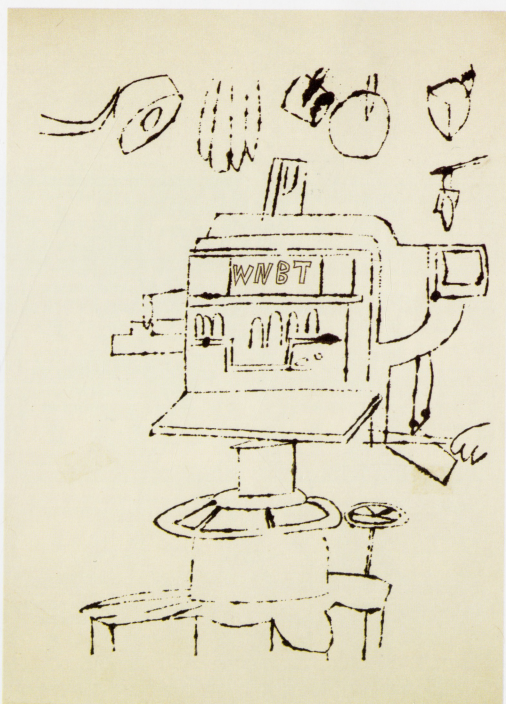
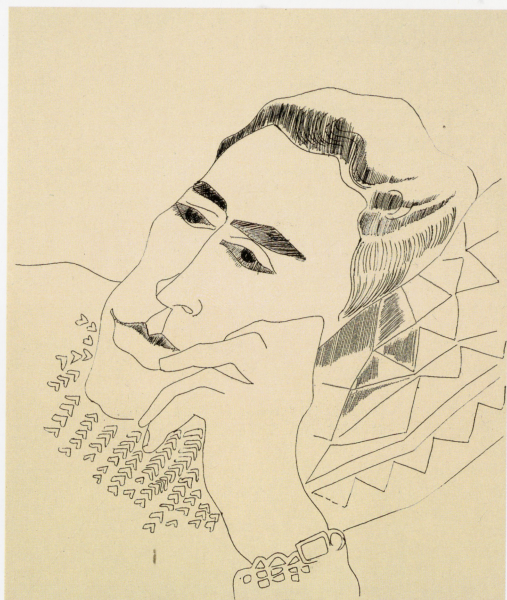
23 x 29 in.

Unidentified Male

about 1955

Ink on manila paper

16 $\frac{3}{4}$ x 13 $\frac{7}{8}$ in.



WNB Live TV Camera

1952

Ink and graphite on
Strathmore paper

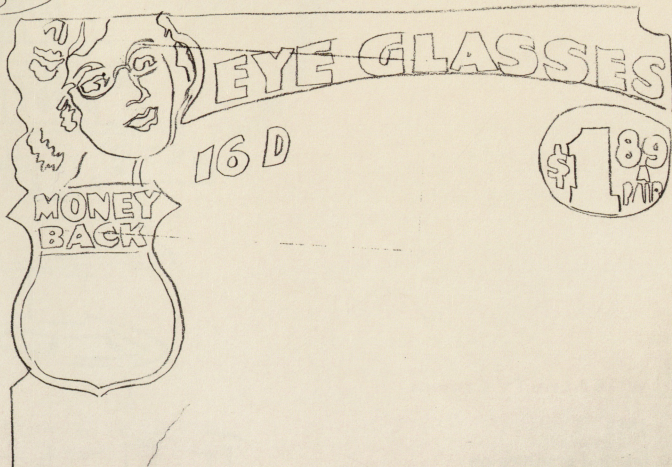
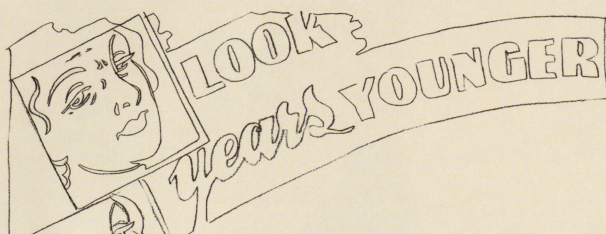
12 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 10 in.

Look Years Younger

1962

Graphite on paper

24 x 18 in.

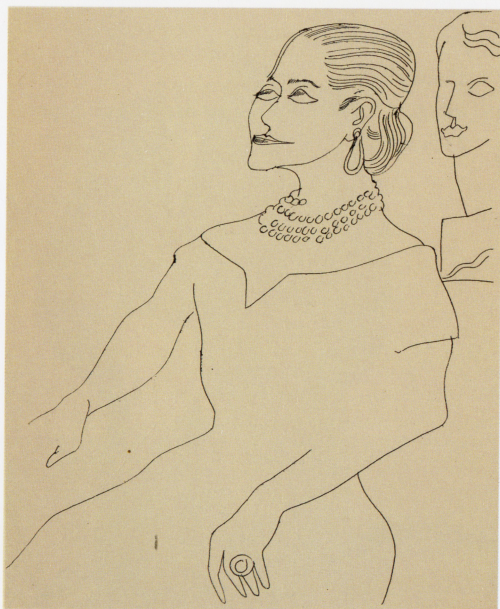


Helena Rubinstein

1957

Ink on manila paper

16⁷/₈ x 13³/₄ in.



15 Dollar Bills

1962

Ink on paper

20¹/₂ x 28³/₄ in.



Gold Shoe (Read Miles)

about 1953

Ink, gold leaf, and gold paper appliqué on paper

13 $\frac{7}{8}$ x 18 $\frac{3}{4}$ in.





Male Fashion Figure

1961

Ink and ink wash on Strathmore paper

26½ x 15¼ in.

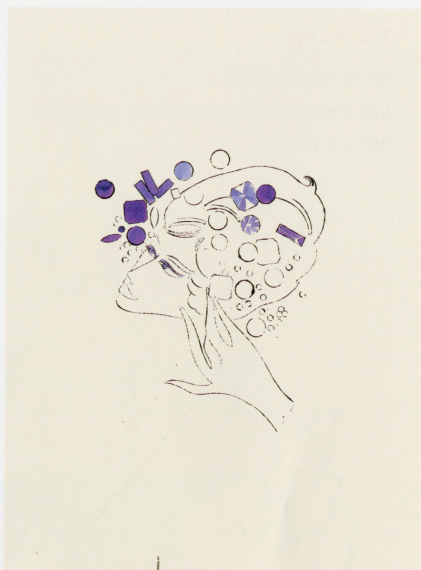


Female Head (Blue Gems in Hair)

1959

Ink and Dr. Martin's Aniline Dye
on Strathmore paper

28⁵/₈ x 22⁵/₈ in.

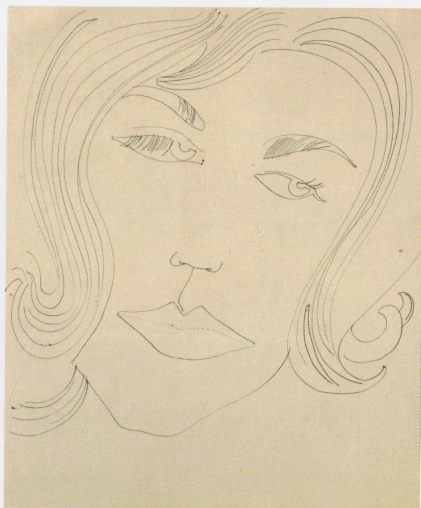


Unidentified Female

about 1962

Ink on manila paper

16⁷/₈ x 13⁷/₈ in.



Two Female Fashion Figures

1960–61

Ink and Dr. Martin's Aniline Dye
on Strathmore paper

29 x 23 in.

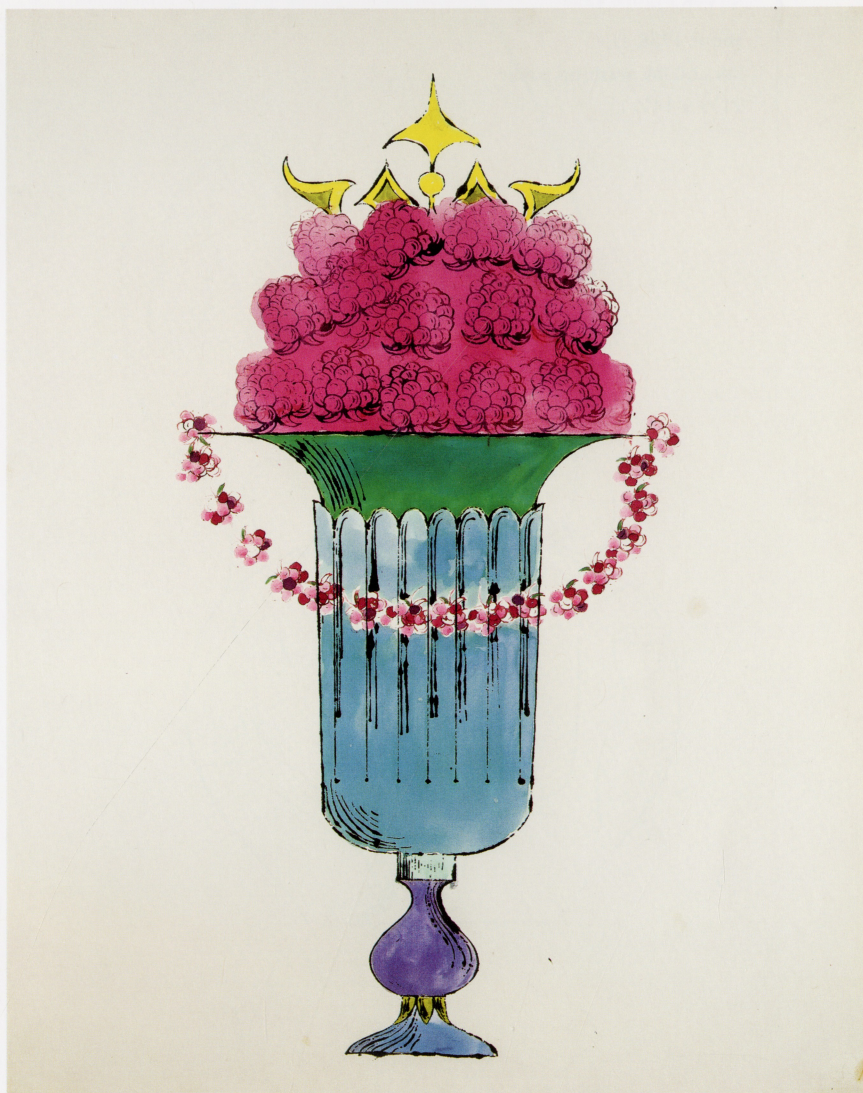
The Picnic

about 1959–1960

Ink, watercolor, and gouache on paper

28½ x 22½ in.





Untitled (Ice Cream Dessert)

1959

Ink and ink wash on Strathmore paper

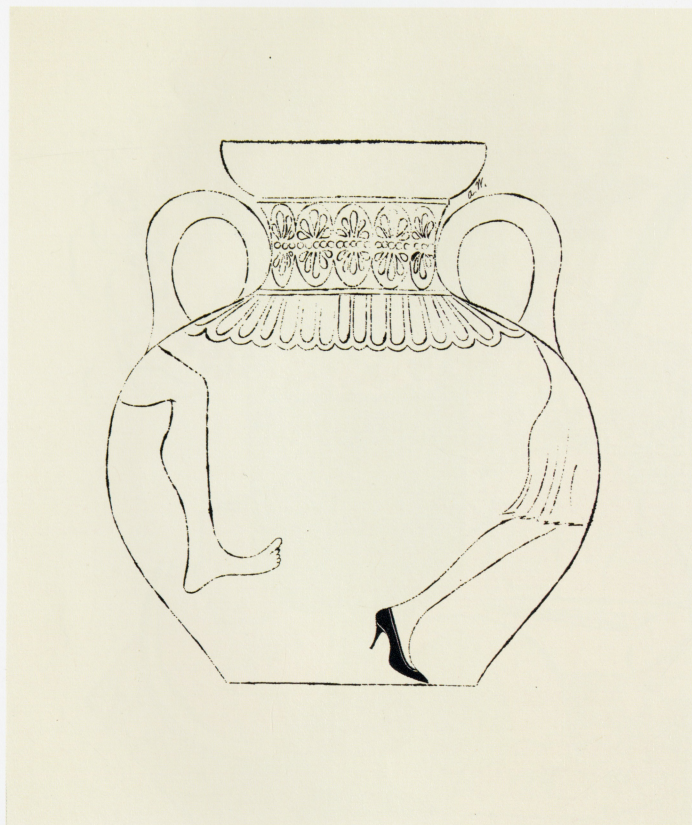
29 x 23 in.

Greek Figure Vase

about 1958

Ink and ink wash on paper

21½ x 14¼ in.

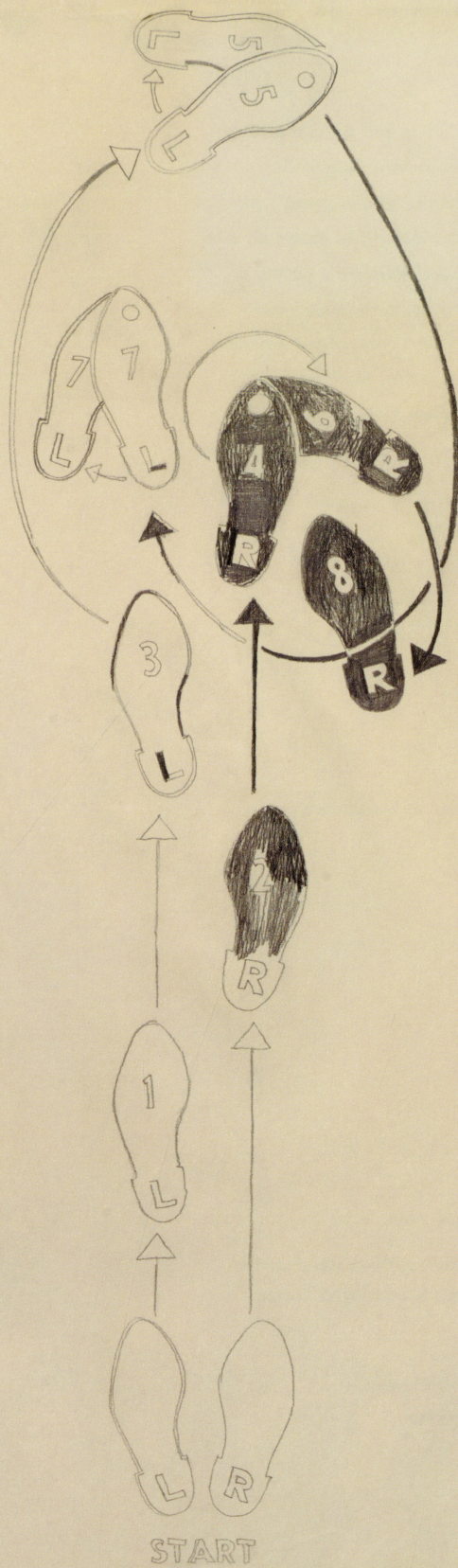


Dance Steps

1962

Graphite on paper

40 x 30 in.



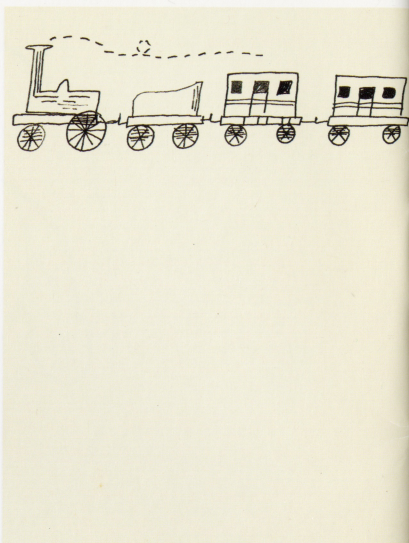
Dave Hickey writes fiction and cultural criticism. A recipient of the MacArthur Foundation Fellowship (known as the “genius grant”), his published writings include critical essays on art, numerous museum catalogues on a variety of artists’ work, and articles for publications including *Rolling Stone*, *Art News*, *Art in America*, *Artforum*, *Harper’s Magazine*, and *Vanity Fair*. He lives in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Untitled (Train)

1952

Ink on paper

11 x 8½ in.



Sam

1952

Ink and watercolor on Strathmore paper

23 x 14 in.



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